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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Kolping International Society and International Association of Charities, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. This paper is the product of a dialogue between member unions of the German Federation of Unions (DGB) and a working group of the German Commission for Justice and Peace, among them AIC and Kolping International, both NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The following text is an excerpt.

2. Human work encompasses a large number of aspects which cannot be reduced simply to gaining income and economic security, as fundamental and indispensable as this function of work is today. Both Christian social teaching and the trade union movement have always stressed the comprehensive significance of work for the individual and the human community, and have construed concrete political demands from this conviction.

3. Work promotes people's creativity, their flexibility and their openness; they remain intellectually and physically mobile. In this sense, work makes a significant contribution to a person's self-realization. Furthermore, participation in the division of tasks within society is a central key to social participation. Nonetheless, however, family work and voluntary and civic commitment have always taken on considerable significance in the understanding of both Christians and of the trade unions. Human work in all its manifestations is vital to conserving and respecting people's dignity, and it is an expression of social life.

4. For this reason, work is different in qualitative terms from the production factor "capital" (and the production factor "natural resources"). Nonetheless, work is frequently regarded as merely a production and cost factor which is moved around like a number at will without taking account of the comprehensive nature of work and its existential meaning.

5. This runs counter to our shared understanding of work as having been learned by people in the various spiritual and value-orientated traditions and shaped according to social rules in their respective cultures. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recognized that an internationally binding joint foundation for this understanding must be found. A distinction is made here between the "right to work" and "rights at work"; these are however brought together to form the concept of decent work because they are so closely linked.

6. People who work pass through several phases of life, and hence of employment. The manifestation assumed by work cannot always be identical in these phases, but must in each instance accommodate a variety of individual, biographical, social and economic requirements. This benefits not only the individual, but also society and industry, the older, younger and following generations as well as those in between. A good system of basic and further training guarantees the success of entrepreneurial activity and the positive development of a pluralist democracy. A modern family policy supporting child-raising, stable social security systems and the promotion of political and voluntary commitment serve to secure social peace. Thus, societies and enterprises benefit in equal measure from a policy of decent work.

7. In solidarity which spans nations and cultures, the social dimension of work must also figure in the international context, such as with staff who work for transnational enterprises. Moreover, solidarity should be practiced with the precariously and informally employed, particularly also with workers who are

seconded to countries, and with those who work on a bogus self-employed basis, who are frequently excluded from social security and rights — legally or illegally.

8. The informalization of the labour market is amplified by the globalization of markets. The concomitant economic division of tasks promotes for instance the decoupling of specific services and production stages from the core enterprise, ranging to work at home in bogus self-employment. The threat to move jobs to countries where costs are lower will remain until worldwide agreements have been reached to protect employment.

9. The situation is already dramatic today, given that more than two-thirds of the working population are employed in the so-called informal economy in many countries. Undignified work is particularly common, and frequently is the sad normality.

10. The liberalization of the labour market means for most of those concerned a profound lack of security to plan their future. Neither international nor national employment policy has so far developed coherent concepts to put a stop to these negative trends so that people can live and survive by the work of their own hands and perhaps even achieve a certain prosperity and security for themselves and their families. Individual human and social needs must be harmonized and balanced with economic requirements in working processes as far as possible.

11. In many countries with a high share of informal workers, such workers make a considerable contribution to the economy without being included in the statistics. Nonetheless, most informal workers live in poverty. Grass-roots and self-help-orientated projects aiming to fight poverty start by providing education and subsidizing training, providing initial equipment to business start-ups and trying to improve access to microcredits. Although development cooperation of state and civil society players looks at the respective political and economic framework of a country, the significance of the right to organize, of the right of political expression, of the right to represent interests together in the informal economy, is nonetheless still too frequently disregarded.

12. Legislatures must create reliable framework conditions for the self-organization of those who are engaged in informal dependent employment or self-employment. Access to social security systems and the establishment of enterprises must be made possible quickly and without undue bureaucracy. Because of their unclear status, informal workers are frequently subject to considerable arbitrary treatment on the part of law enforcement agencies. This situation hinders the growth of entrepreneurial activity, and hence prevents the creation of more jobs. Legal security thus not only leads to the creation of more jobs, but also makes it easier to enforce core labour standards in societies with a high proportion of informal workers.

13. Governments must undertake to implement a policy of employment promotion and of ensuring social peace. Transnational enterprises and private investors should orientate their corporate policy in countries with a high share of informal workers in such a way that they in no way integrate informal work into their corporate policy by reducing the number of jobs and by outsourcing, but must strive to create official, skilled and socially secure jobs.

14. In countries with largely formal employment, in turn, which are confronted by increasing informalization and by reductions in social achievements caused by

global competition, employment policy must aim to make the changes that are under way in the requirements made in the world of work socially just, and by these means must preserve social peace. Employment policy is not a field of work which can be considered in isolation; in particular it must be viewed in conjunction with international economic policy and national educational and family policy. Germany's EU membership requires a broadening of the outlook to include the European employment situation.

15. It cannot be overlooked that conditions on the labour market are also becoming more difficult in Germany. Deregulation and outsourcing, with which Governments and enterprises react to globalization, weaken the collective representation of interests of those in dependent employment. High unemployment leads to a situation in which people must accept ever-worsening working conditions.

16. The first goal of policymakers must be to secure and create decent employment so that all men and women can make a living. High unemployment is the main cause of marginalization and impoverishment. Work must be socially secure, and wages must be fair.

17. The world of work is starting to divide. In addition to employment relationships which are subject to obligatory social insurance and collective agreements, one increasingly finds precarious employment relationships with unstable employment, greater health risks and in some cases exploitative, low wages.

18. In order to put in place a global employment policy, it is necessary to establish internationally valid principles and rights at work based on a consensus of ethical ideas which satisfy the definition of decent work. Over and above this, the naturally restricted mobility of the labour market requires globally mobile markets, such as the capital market, to be effectively regulated in order to not push employment from the focus of the protection requirement. In this sense, trade unions and the Church will continue in their endeavours for decent work.